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Perspective-Taking and Self–Other Overlap: Fostering Social Bonds and Facilitating Social Coordination

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The present article offers a conceptual model for how the cognitive processes associated with perspective-taking facilitate social coordination and foster social bonds. We suggest that the benefits of perspective-taking accrue through an increased self–other overlap in cognitive representations and discuss the implications of this perspective-taking induced self–other overlap for stereotyping and prejudice. Whereas perspective-taking decreases stereotyping of others (through application of the self to the other), it increases stereotypicality of one's own behavior (through inclusion of the other in the self). To promote social bonds, perspective-takers utilize information, including stereotypes, to coordinate their behavior with others. The discussion focuses on the implications, both positive and negative, of this self–other overlap for social relationships and discusses how conceptualizing perspective-taking, as geared toward supporting *specific* social bonds, provides a framework for understanding why the effects of perspective-taking are typically target-specific and do not activate a general helping mind-set. Through its attempts to secure social bonds, perspective-taking can be an engine of social harmony, but can also reveal a dark side, one full of ironic consequences.

KEYWORDS perspective-taking, social bonds, social coordination, stereotyping and prejudice

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THE FORMATION and maintenance of social bonds is a critical ingredient for psychological and physical well-being (Maslow, 1968). Indeed, humans appear to have a fundamental need to belong, to be connected to others, forming the basis for much of social interaction. One way that social bonds can emerge or be reinforced is through smooth social coordination. By creating a psychological sense of similarity and a feeling of behavioral and mental connectedness, social coordination is the glue that binds and bonds social relationships.

What behaviors, social strategies, and cognitive processes are available to aid in the pursuit of social bonds? We propose that one simple yet vital strategy for smoothing the cogs of social interaction and building social bonds is perspective-taking. We define perspective-taking as the process of imagining the world from another's vantage point or imagining oneself in another's shoes. Although many scholars have suggested that perspective-taking increases feelings of sympathy and empathy (Batson, 1991), we suggest that the cognitive consequences of perspective-taking are a critical mechanism behind its ability to facilitate social coordination and foster social bonds. When we take the perspective of another, there is greater overlap between mental representations of the self and mental representations of the other (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a). We contend that as a result of this increased self–other overlap, perspective-takers are able to effectively coordinate their behavior and to bond with others.

In this article, we offer a conceptual model for how the processes associated with perspective-taking aid in the pursuit and maintenance of social bonds, specifically highlighting its application to research on stereotyping and prejudice (see Figure 1). Ample evidence has demonstrated that perspective-taking leads individuals to see more of themselves in others and affects how they evaluate and describe others. For example, prior research has shown that perspective-taking can aid in the formation of social bonds by decreasing prejudice and stereotyping of target individuals and groups (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). Through perspective-taking and the application of the self to the other, social bias is reduced, allowing perspective-taking to aid in the creation and maintenance of social bonds.

Although research has shown that perspective-takers see more of themselves in the other, one of the central questions we explore is whether perspective-takers will also see more of the other in themselves and come to act more like the target. By examining how taking the perspective of a member of a stereotyped group impacts one's own self-description and one's own behavior, we suggest that perspective-taking may be an effective means of not only decreasing stereotyping, but also increasing behavioral mimicry and coordinating social behavior. We review some of our recent studies that show that perspective-taking, while decreasing stereotyping of others, also impacts self-description in a stereotypic manner and results in more stereotype-consistent behaviors. Thus, not only can perspective-taking increase social bonds by decreasing prejudice and stereotyping, it can also increase social bonds by creating synchrony and social coordination. We explore this relationship between perspective-taking and facilitating social bonds and social coordination, discussing the role of stereotypes as an impediment *and* facilitator to the formation of social bonds. Through both seeing the self in the other and seeing the other in the

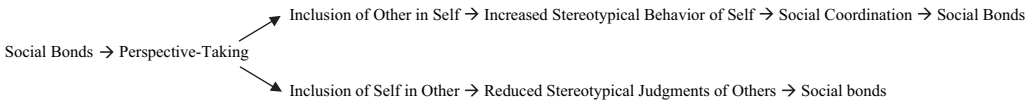

Figure 1. Reciprocal relationship between social bonds and perspective-taking when taking the perspective of an individual from a stereotyped group.

self, perspective-takers are able to navigate a complex social world, coordinating their behavior with a diverse set of individuals, and establishing multicultural social bonds.

The role of perspective-taking in social coordination and social bonds

Scholars from Maslow (1968) to Baumeister and Leary (1995) have considered the need to belong, or the desire to establish and maintain social ties, as the most important motivator of behavior once the basic physiological needs for nourishment and safety have been fulfilled. The fundamental and motivating nature of the need to belong is best demonstrated through the severe negative consequences that occur when someone is socially excluded. Social isolation impacts cognitive, social, and physical functioning, with excluded individuals displaying a decreased ability to exhibit logical reasoning (Baumeister, Twenge, & Nuss, 2002), an increase in self-defeating behaviors (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003; Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2003), and detrimental physical responses, such as stress, anxiety, and reduced physical health (Williams, 2001). The need to belong is so strong that it leads people to expend great effort to maintain long-lasting bonds (Bridges, 1980), even when the relationship is destructive (e.g. abusive spouses, Strube, 1988).

We contend that perspective-taking, having long been recognized as critical to proper social functioning, is a key ingredient in the reduction of interpersonal conflict and the construction, maintenance, and preservation of social bonds. From cognitive functioning (Piaget, 1932) to moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1976), the ability to entertain different perspectives is a crucial mechanism of successful development and is oftentimes considered the foundation of human social capacity (Mead, 1934). Davis (1983) discussed the role of perspective-taking in social coordination and social bonds, finding that perspective-taking, as measured by an individual difference measure, was positively correlated with social competence. More direct evidence that perspective-taking is geared toward facilitating the need to belong and to form bonds with others comes from research showing that individuals are more likely to take the perspective of close others and taking the perspective of others increases a sense of psychological closeness (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004). As stated eloquently by Davis, '[a] perspective-taking ability should allow an individual to anticipate the behavior and reactions of others, therefore facilitating smoother and more rewarding interpersonal relationships' (Davis, 1983, p. 115).

It is clear that forming rewarding social bonds is a hallmark of well-being, and being deprived of these bonds is the epitome of psychological devastation. Unfortunately, social bonds are damaged in the presence of interpersonal conflict and under the specter of stereotyping. The very thought that one may stereotype another or that some unintentional expression could be interpreted as prejudicial can taint interactions with a palpable feeling of anxiety, making the prospect of intergroup contact foreboding (Blair, Park, & Bachelor, 2003; Plant & Devine, 2003; Shelton, 2003; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Since perspective-taking has been shown to successfully decrease stereotyping, prejudice, and social aggression (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a; Richardson, Hammock, Smith, Gardner, & Signo, 1994; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Vescio et al., 2003), it can be used to improve and build social bonds. Impressively, taking the perspective of a target allows perspective-takers to decrease stereotyping, prejudice, and intergroup bias toward the target *and* the target's group (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Vescio et al., 2003). By reducing stereotyping and the palpable concern that one may display seemingly prejudicial responses, perspective-taking improves the climate of social interaction and facilitates the formation and maintenance of social bonds.

Perspective-taking also appears to facilitate social coordination. Perspective-taking, as

measured by an individual difference scale, increases one's ability to mimic others' behaviors, which then produces smoother, more harmonious interactions (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), suggesting that behavioral mimicry serves the need to belong, that it is a signaling device to communicate interpersonal connections. Overall, mimicry is associated with greater rapport (LaFrance, 1982), increases when the need for affiliation is on active duty, with people mimicking those individuals whom they like (Cheng & Chartrand, 2003; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003), liking those who mimic them (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), and with natural differences in perspective-taking (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999) moderating these effects.

Further evidence that perspective-taking, mimicry, and social coordination are related comes from research on interdependent, as opposed to independent, self-construals. Interdependent and independent self-construals differ in their conceptualization of individuals' relationships with others, with interdependent individuals including others in the self-concept, and independent individuals focusing on a self that is autonomous from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz, 1994). As one might expect, individuals with interdependent self-construals are more likely to take the perspective of others (Vorauer & Cameron, 2002) and those with interdependent self-construals, whether experimentally manipulated or examined as a cultural difference (e.g. Japanese vs. Westerners), also display more behavioral mimicry (van Baaren, Maddux, Chartrand, de Bouter, & van Knippenberg, 2003). Through increased mimicry, perspective-taking serves as a device of social coordination, helping to cement and form social bonds.

There is clearly a reciprocal relationship between perspective-taking, behavioral mimicry, and rapport. Is there a common underlying process that connects all of these variables? We turn to the role of self–other overlap as an important mechanism in driving the diverse effects of perspective-taking.

Perspective-taking and self–other overlap: Application of the self to the other and application of the other to the self?

Perspective-taking has been shown to increase the overlap between mental representations of the self and mental representations of the other (Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a). Indeed, many of the effects of perspective-taking can be explained through this increased self–other overlap in cognitive representations: the relationship between collectivism and perspective-taking is mediated by the amount of self–other overlap (Vorauer & Cameron, 2002); the relationship between perspective-taking and decreased stereotyping is mediated by the level of self–other overlap (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a); and the relationship between perspective-taking and helping behavior appears to be driven by perceptions of oneness (Cialdini et al., 1997). For example, Cialdini et al. (1997) found that the relationship between empathy and willingness to help was eliminated when the degree of self–other overlap was statistically controlled.

One question that emerges from the self–other overlap findings is whether the overlap is driven more by seeing the self in the other or by inclusion of the other in the self. The former, seeing more of the self in the other, refers to perceiving the other as possessing characteristics of the self, making the other more 'self-like', as suggested by Davis et al. (1996). The latter, including the other in the self, on the other hand, refers to the extent the self comes to include characteristics of the other. Is the self only applied to the other or is the other also applied to the self? This question is particularly difficult to answer based on some of the methods used to judge self–other overlap. For example, in the study on the relationship between perspective-taking and collectivism (Vorauer & Cameron, 2002), self–other overlap was measured using the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS). The IOS (Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991) is a scale that contains seven Venn diagrams representing varying degrees of self–other overlap.

Thus, the scale measures overlap between self and other but cannot distinguish between whether the self is being included in the other or the other is being included in the self. Despite its name, the scale only measures perceived closeness.

Much of the research on perspective-taking induced self–other overlap has focused on and demonstrated that increased self–other overlap is typically characterized by seeing more of ourselves in the other, with a greater percentage of self-descriptive traits being ascribed to the target (Davis et al., 1996). The representation of the target constructed by the perspective-taker comes to resemble the perspective-taker's own self-representation. Not only does perspective-taking result in greater application of the self to the target (Cialdini et al., 1997; Davis, 1983; Davis et al., 1996), it also leads to greater application of the self to the group to which the target belongs (Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a). In the Galinsky and Moskowitz study (2000a), the more the perspective-taker saw the self in the target, the more he/she saw the self in the target's group, and the less likely the group was to be stereotyped. Since individuals tend to have egocentrically biased opinions of themselves, perspective-takers apply positive self-descriptors to the target, resulting in an improved view of the target and decreased prejudiced and stereotyping (Galinsky & Ku, 2004). In fact, Cialdini et al. (1997) have suggested that because perspective-taking leads one to see more of oneself in the other, perspective-taking induced helping is not really altruistic, but can be characterized as egoistically motivated. Although these studies demonstrate the importance of applying the self to others in intergroup and interpersonal relations, they do not speak to whether the other is also applied to the self during perspective-taking. Is perspective-taking bidirectional with true self and other merging or is the self applied to the other without reciprocation?

Several lines of research provide some evidence that others can be included in the self. For instance, in their self-expansion model, Aron and colleagues (Aron & Aron, 1986, 1996, 1997; Aron & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2001; Aron et al., 1991; Wright & Tropp, 2002) argue that humans can satisfy the basic motivation for interpersonal closeness by expanding their self-concepts to include others in the self. Thus, close relationships (e.g. spouses) are characterized by including the other in one's own mental self-representation (Aron et al., 1991). Similarly, like the work on independent and interdependent self-construals, when the social self is made accessible (by priming people with the word 'we'), individuals assimilate or include social comparison information into their self-representations (Stapel & Koomen, 2000). Additionally, on constructs related to affiliation, individuals show inclusion of their interaction partners in their own self-descriptions, suggesting that including others in the self assists goals related to social connection (Tiedens & Jimenez, 2003). In an intergroup context, research has demonstrated that in-group identification can be measured by the degree to which the in-group is included in the self (Tropp & Wright, 2001).

Seeing more of the other in the self also relates to the concept of self-stereotyping. Self-stereotyping refers to the extent to which group members consider traits that are descriptive of the group to be descriptive of the self—in essence one possesses a stereotypical self-perception (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Such self-stereotyping often tends to be selective, with group members more likely to characterize positive stereotypic attributes as self-descriptive (Biernat, Vescio, & Green, 1996). Importantly, self-stereotyping relates to maintaining social bonds and meeting the need for inclusion (Pickett, Bonner, & Coleman, 2002). When one's need to belong is on active alert, one is more likely to alter one's private and public image to correspond with the specific stereotypic content of one's in-group.

We therefore suggest that self–other overlap in perspective-taking is not only driven by applying the self to the other but may also be caused by including the other in the self, with perspective-takers applying their own traits onto others but also viewing the other's attributes as

self-descriptive. We contend that not only will perspective-taking lead to changes in self-description, but it should also alter the behaviorial tendencies of the perspective-taker to match those of the target (see Figure 1). Although some evidence suggests that perspective-takers mimic the behaviors of others (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999), a question remains of what happens when one takes the perspective of a member of a stereotyped out-group. Will one come to see the self as possessing those traits that are characteristic of that group, as well as show behavioral tendencies that are consistent with the stereotype of that group?

Perspective-taking: Becoming and behaving stereotypically

By applying oneself to the target and the target group, perspective-taking has been shown to be an important strategy for decreasing stereotyping and prejudice (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Vescio et al., 2003), and thus, building and maintaining social bonds. We have recently begun to explore whether perspective-taking increases the overlap between self and other representations by not only applying the self to others, but also by assimilating the stereotype of others into the self. By including the other in the self, perspective-takers should be more likely to coordinate behaviors, to increase perceptions of closeness and connectedness, and ultimately to enhance social bonds.

In most of our studies, we contrast perspective-taking with stereotype suppression because both are intuitively appealing strategies for navigating multicultural landscapes. Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000a) demonstrated that perspective-taking is a more successful strategy for controlling stereotyping than is suppression; whereas perspective-takers, by applying the self to the target, decrease stereotyping and prejudice, suppression often ironically and unintentionally produces the very stereotypic thoughts one is trying to avoid (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a; Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994).[1] By also including the other in the self and increasing social coordination, we contend that perspective-taking is, overall, a more effective approach for securing social bonds than is suppression.

There are a number of ways that perspective-taking has been manipulated. In the most utilized paradigm, participants listen to a randomly selected interview ostensibly from a local radio station and are given specific instructions on how to listen to the tape (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Maner et al., 2002; Vescio et al., 2003). In most cases, the person in the tape describes a distressing situation (with the most commonly used tape involving a woman named Katie Banks who lost her parents in a car accident and is struggling to stay in school while having to care for her younger siblings). In the control condition of this paradigm, participants are told to listen to the tape objectively, in a detached manner. In the typical perspective-taking manipulation, participants are instructed to imagine how the person in the tape feels, focusing on how the events have affected his or her life. This condition is often labeled 'perspective-taking other condition' because the focus is on what the other person is thinking and feeling. Sometimes, a second perspective-taking condition has been used, often labeled 'perspective-taking self condition', in which participants are told to imagine how they would feel if they were the person in the tape. In this paradigm, the manipulation checks of perspective-taking often involve measuring feelings of empathy (i.e. sympathetic, compassionate, soft-hearted, warm, tender, and moved) and/or asking participants to report the degree to which they remained objective when listening to the tape and the degree to which they imagined what the person in the tape was feeling and experiencing. This paradigm allows researchers to use different targets (e.g. from a stereotyped group) and to describe different types of situations (e.g. whether the person is treated in a discriminatory manner by others).

A second paradigm used to induce perspective-taking involves participants writing a narrative

essay about the typical day in the life of a person in a photograph (Galinsky & Moskowitiz, 2000; Galinsky & Ku, 2004). In the control condition of this paradigm, participants are simply told to write about the typical day of the photographed individual. In the perspective-taking condition, participants are told to go through the day as if they were that person, looking at the world through their eyes. This manipulation of perspective-taking is essentially a 'perspective-taking self' manipulation. This paradigm was adapted from Macrae et al. (1994) who used it to explore the consequences of stereotype suppression. In the suppression condition for the 'day in the life narrative essay' task, participants are told to actively avoid letting stereotypic thoughts influence their essays. Whether or not participants write their essays in the first person is often used as a manipulation check of perspective-taking (Galinsky & Ku, 2004). In this paradigm, the person in the photograph is usually a member of a salient stereotyped group.

The main differences between these two paradigms is that in the 'listen to an interview' paradigm, experimenters control the content of all information and the participants are a passive recipient of that information. In the 'day in the life narrative essay' paradigm, participants construct and control the content of their expressions. Both paradigms represent different ways that individuals may psychologically interact with others and we used both paradigms in investigating whether perspective-taking increases social coordination by increasing the stereotypicality of the perspective-taker's behavior.

Seeing the self stereotypically

In one experiment (Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2005), we gave participants a photograph of a cheerleader, replete with pom-poms, and asked participants to write a day in her life by either taking the perspective of the woman in the photograph or by suppressing any stereotypes of the woman. After the day in the life task, participants rated how attractive and sexy they currently felt. We predicted that if perspective-taking leads individuals to come to see themselves as more like the target of perspective-taking, these participants would feel more attractive than suppression condition participants, in line with the stereotype of cheerleaders as beautiful and sexy. This is exactly what we found—simply taking the perspective of a cheerleader led participants to see themselves as more attractive: perspective-takers became gorgeous in their own minds. In follow-up studies, we have had participants write 'a day in the life' essays about a photograph of an African-American male or of an elderly male. Perspective-takers, compared to both a control condition and a suppression condition, rated traits that were stereotypic of African-Americans and the elderly as more self-descriptive. When we take the perspective of others we come to include their traits, even stereotypic ones, as being part of the self.

Behaving stereotypically

We next explored whether perspective-takers, having come to judge themselves in more stereotypical terms, would actually behave more stereotypically. This is a complicated question because stereotype activation, in and of itself, often leads to stereotype-consistent behaviors on the part of perceivers. For example, being primed with the elderly stereotype led college students to walk more slowly (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996) and being primed with the professor stereotype (Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1998) led participants to perform better on an intellectual task. Thus, the mere activation of any construct, independent of perspective-taking, tends to increase behaviors consistent with that construct.

However, some evidence suggests that whether stereotype-consistent behaviors occur may be connected to whether social bonds are desired or avoided. When there is conflict or competition with an out-group, intergroup comparisons result in behavioral contrast effects, with one's own behavior becoming less similar to the stereotype of the out-group (Spears, Gordijn, Dijksterhuis, & Stapel, 2004). For example, when social identities and an 'us vs. them' mentality are salient, one is likely to walk more rather than less quickly following activation of the elderly stereotype. In contrast,

the amount of contact with members of a stereotyped group has been shown to increase the propensity to behave in ways that are stereotypical of that group (Dijksterhuis, Aarts, Bargh, & van Knippenberg, 2000). The fact that contact and amount of experience also tends to increase perspective-taking suggests that perspective-taking may increase stereotypicality of an individual's behavior. These findings of behavioral contrast away from the activated stereotypes when intergroup distinctions are high and of behavioral assimilation when previous experience with the outgroup is extensive provide some preliminary evidence that concerns over social bonds may play a role in whether one acts more or less like the target's stereotype. Building off both the behavioral mimicry work and the finding that experience with stereotyped groups predicts the amount of stereotype-consistent behavior, we contend that perspective-taking will be likely to lead to stereotype-consistent behaviors.

Additionally, Wheeler, Jarvis, and Petty (2001) found that having participants write a day in the life of a person with a stereotypically African-American name (Tyrone) led to more stereotype-consistent behavior (i.e. poor performance on an intellectual task), with this effect strongest when individuals happened to write their essays in the first person. Since writing narrative essays in the first person is often used as a manipulation check for perspective-taking (Galinsky & Ku, 2004), those participants who wrote in the first person in the Wheeler et al. study may have been taking the perspective of the target person, causing them to display more stereotypical behavior. However, because Wheeler et al. did not manipulate perspective-taking, the hypothesized relationship between perspective-taking and stereotypicality of behavior is open to a number of alternative explanations.

We specifically tested whether perspective-taking leads to an increase in stereotype-consistent behavior (Galinsky et al., 2005). We manipulated perspective-taking by telling participants that they were going to listen to an audiotape of a person describing a typical day in his life and that they would later be asked to give their impressions of the person in the audiotape. The person in the tape described himself as an assistant professor of political science, a stereotypically analytical person. We used the common perspective-taking manipulation (Batson et al., 1997; see also Vescio et al., 2003) of having participants imagine how the person in the tape was feeling and thinking (perspective-taking other condition) or imagine how they themselves would feel and think if they were that person (perspective-taking self condition). Non perspective-takers/control participants were told to listen to the tape objectively. After listening to the tape, we had participants complete a supposedly unrelated task. The second task was described as a pilot test to develop materials for another study exploring hemispheric differences in cognition. Participants were instructed to complete 24 analytical questions adapted from the Law School Admissions Test as quickly yet accurately as possible in 20 minutes. We predicted that participants would perform significantly better on the analytic task after taking the perspective of the professor. Consistent with this prediction, our results showed that taking the perspective (both perspective-taking self and perspective-taking other conditions) of a stereotypically analytical individual improved analytical reasoning ability. Becoming smarter after taking the perspective of a professor should facilitate interaction with such a person, allowing the perspective-taker to riff seamlessly in conversation.

Increasing stereotypicality of one's own behavior while decreasing stereotypicality in judgments of others

Perspective-taking appears to increase the stereotypicality of behavior when the stereotypic characteristics are positive and socially valued (e.g. analytic ability for professors). The question of whether negative stereotypic traits will also affect perspective-takers' behavior is particularly interesting. One response by perspective-takers may be to decrease stereotypicality of their behavior to compensate for the negative stereotypic

attribute. For example, when interacting with an elderly person, a perspective-taker's memory might become particularly active and accurate. However, Tiedens and Jimenez (2003) have found that imagining interacting with a familiar other who is agreeable leads to more agreeable self-perceptions, but that imagining interacting with a familiar other who is quarrelsome leads to more quarrelsome self-perceptions, suggesting that even negative attributes of others can become part of the self. Similarly, Galinsky et al. (2005) found that after taking the perspective of an African American, both positive (athletic and rhythmic) and negative (loud and aggressive) traits that are stereotypic of African-Americans were deemed more self-descriptive. The findings by Dijksterhuis et al. (2000) that individuals become more forgetful after having spent time with the elderly suggests that behavioral compensation for the target's negative stereotypic behavior may be unlikely. Negative stereotypic traits, having become momentarily self-descriptive, may drive behavior, with perspective-takers acting in a stereotype-consistent fashion even when that behavior has potentially negative connotations.

Considering the effects of self–other overlap, we might thus see that perspective-takers are likely to walk more slowly after taking the perspective of an elderly male to calibrate their behavior with the expected behavior of an elderly person (through inclusion of the other in the self). However, taking the perspective of the elderly should also decrease stereotyping of the elderly (through application of the self to the other). Perspective-taking should improve social bonds by both decreasing social bias and by increasing social coordination.

Thus, it is possible that perspective-taking will result in an intriguing dissociation between judgment and behavior. Although some theorists assume a direct perception to behavior link (e.g. Wheeler & Petty, 2001), others have postulated separate schemas for perception and behavior. Carver, Ganellen, Froming, and Chambers (1983) suggested that individuals use interpretive schemas for perceiving and understanding behaviors, but use behavioral schemas for producing manifest behaviors. Similarly, Mussweiler and Förster (2000) have suggested that when an individual's perceptual and behavioral experiences with a stimulus diverge, judgments and behavior may become dissociated from each other. We contend that not only can differential perceptual and behavioral experiences with a stimulus lead to a systematic dissociation between judgments and behavior, but that this dissociation can also result from the strategies and goals (e.g. perspective-taking) that an individual has.

To examine this potential judgment/behavior dissociation, we had participants take the perspective of an elderly man, evaluate an ambiguously dependent (a trait stereotypical of the elderly) individual, and then walk down a hallway (Galinsky et al., 2005). Participants came to the lab and were first shown a photograph of an elderly man and were asked to write a day in his life by either taking the perspective of the man or by suppressing any stereotypes. After the day in the life task, participants read a paragraph adapted from Banaji, Hardin, and Rothman (1993), in which a woman named Donna performs a series of ambiguously dependent behaviors. To measure stereotype accessibility and application, participants were then asked to evaluate Donna's level of dependency. After rating Donna, participants were told that the first part of the experiment was over and they could walk down the hall to the next part. To measure stereotypicality of behavior, we surreptitiously timed how long it took participants to walk down the hallway because walking slowly is a behavior that is stereotypic of the elderly. Since we believe that perspective-taking is a strategy geared toward social coordination, we predicted that perspective-takers would use the stereotype in behavior, but would not use the stereotype perceptually. We found exactly that. Perspective-takers walked more slowly, using the stereotype to coordinate their behaviors; however, perspective-takers also showed less stereotypicality in their judgments of how dependent Donna was, presumably using the activated self-concept (rather than the stereotype) in perception and judgment. We believe

the reduction in stereotypicality of judgments and the simultaneous increase in stereotypicality of behavior is driven by the fact that perspective-taking is a strategy geared toward smoothing the cogs of social interaction and securing social bonds.

Discussion

Humans are social creatures who necessitate and actively seek out interactions with others to satisfy the fundamental need to belong. In this article, we have explored how perspective-taking is a simple and subtle strategy that can form and strengthen social bonds through a number of means. Perspective-taking is able to improve social relationships by decreasing stereotyping and prejudice toward the target and target's group. In addition, perspective-taking smoothes the cogs of social interaction by facilitating social coordination. These benefits of perspective-taking can be explained through a simple process: increased self–other overlap. During perspective-taking, representations of the self and representations of the target of perspective-taking come to share an increased number of features. We have discussed how this increased self–other overlap is the product of two different processes. First, the self is applied to the other, so that the other becomes more 'self-like'; the representation of the target constructed by the perspective-taker comes to resemble the perspective-taker's own self-representation. Second, the other is included in the self, so that the self becomes more 'other-like'. Features of the target of perspective-taking are now considered to be self-descriptive. When considered simultaneously, we see that application of the self to the other increases social bonds (through decreased prejudice and stereotyping) whereas application of the other to the self increases social coordination (and hence, social bonds). Through self–other merging—application of the self to the other and inclusion of the other in the self—social coordination is facilitated and social bonds strengthened (see Figure 1).

Davis et al. (1996) and Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000a) have both suggested that there are two separate processes involved in perspective-taking—a conscious, explicit effect and a nonconscious, implicit effect. Feelings of sympathy and increased liking are intended, conscious, explicit effects of perspective-taking. However, during perspective-taking, the self-concept is also implicitly activated and applied toward the target. Evidence that this overlap occurs implicitly comes from research showing that the increased self-target overlap following perspective-taking is not mediated by increased liking and is generally impervious to the availability of cognitive resources (Davis et al., 1996). One question that remains for future research is whether the inclusion of the other in the self also occurs implicitly, whether bi-directional self–other merging is independent of the availability of cognitive resources.

Potential drawbacks of perspective-taking: Egocentric bias, target specificity, and producing conflict and miscoordination

Thus far, we have suggested that both application of the self to the other and inclusion of the other in the self generally have positive effects on social relationships. However, these processes are not without their own potential costs. Increased application of the self to the other suggests a potential irony in the ability of perspective-taking to reduce intergroup biases: perspective-taking builds off egocentric biases to decrease stereotyping and improve outgroup evaluations (Galinsky, 2002). During perspective-taking both positive and negative self-descriptive attributes are applied to the target (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a). Thus, the positive effects of perspective-taking on prejudice depend on the possession of high self-esteem. When perspective-takers feel positively about themselves, their positive self-concepts are activated and applied, elevating opinions of the target group. However, when individuals suffer from low self-esteem, no reduction in prejudice occurs. Galinsky & Ku (2004) found across two experiments, that evaluations of a stereotyped group were only improved when the perspective-taker had positive self-esteem, either chronically or experimentally manipulated. Applying the self to the

other is not a panacea for prejudice reduction, but is only effective when perspective-takers feel positively about themselves.

Similarly, we have focused on the role of perspective-taking in building social bonds. However, unlike a multitude of other cognitive processes and mind-sets, from counterfactual mind-sets (Galinsky & Kray, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000b) to implemental mind-sets (Gollwitzer, Heckhausen, & Steller, 1990), which persist when activated and are utilized in unrelated contexts, perspective-taking tends to produce target-specific effects. Thus, perspective-taking does not create a general helping attitude; instead perspective-taking appears to assist in the formation and maintenance of *specific* social bonds. Taking the perspective of one target person neither decreases stereotyping nor improves evaluations of a different social category, nor does it activate a more general tendency to help. For example, Dovidio, Allen, and Schroeder (1990) found that, following the induction of empathy, assistance only increased for the problematic situation for which empathy was induced and did not activate a more general tendency to help. In intergroup conflicts, taking the perspective of one stigmatized group does not improve attitudes toward other stigmatized groups (Galinsky & Ku, 2005; Vescio et al., 2003). As a result of its target-specific nature, the social bonds that result from perspective-taking can conflict with other normative beliefs, such as justice, fairness, and equity. Because the target of perspective-taking is accorded 'favored' status, perspective-taking can lead to preferential treatment of the target, even when this favoritism leads to fewer contributions to the overall collective (Batson, Batson et al., 1995; Batson, Klein, Highberger, & Shaw, 1995).

Who we take the perspective of has important short- and long-term consequences for how the effects of perspective-taking play out. If we consider an individual taking the perspective of a skinhead, one might imagine the perspective-taker empathizing with and forming tighter social bonds with the skinhead, as well as forming more positive evaluations toward skinheads in general. Although decreasing our stereotypical judgments of skinheads may be an initial step toward improving overall social harmony, the perspective-taker may become inadvertently linked with the negativity of the skinhead and may be unjustly condemned by society. That is, perspective-taking can lead to stigma by association, what Goffman (1963) referred to as courtesy stigma, a belief by observers that the perspective-taker embodies the negative characteristics of the target of perspective-taking.

Taking the perspective of individuals that are deemed objectionable is further complicated when they are members of a salient out-group. For example, in the movie *American History X*, actor Ed Norton plays a skinhead who forms a bond in prison with a Black inmate and is attacked by his fellow skinheads for this new bond. In real life, Susan Sontag and Bill Maher were both condemned following the terrorist attacks on September 11th for taking the perspective of the hijackers and suggesting that the hijackers demonstrated courage and not cowardice. Through perspective-taking, they and others considered the broader social context, suggesting that American foreign policy may, at least in part, have contributed to the fury that motivated Osama Bin Laden and the hijackers. Bill Maher lost his job and Susan Sontag endured vicious verbal attacks. Taking the perspective of salient out-group member may strengthen the bond with that person, but may cost individuals credibility and bonds within the in-group, and can lead to social exclusion.

These examples also relate to the claim that perspective-taking increases moral relativism, that it reduces reliance on moral universals in the long run. Critics of perspective-taking argue that perspective-taking induced tolerance of potentially objectionable behaviors can lead to a slippery slope: with appropriate and constructive horror placated and reduced, noxious behaviors become increasingly acceptable. Too much perspective-taking by too many people can lead society away from moral absolutes, a world of blacks and whites, toward a moral twilight, a world of grays.

Not only can perspective-taking produce

stigma by association, but by impacting self-description and behavior in the service of social coordination (Galinsky et al., 2005), it might also produce warranted condemnation. For instance, the perspective-taker may take on characteristics of the skinhead to coordinate their behaviors and further social bonding with the skinhead. In so doing, the perspective-taker may behave in racist or biased ways that are not only counternormative but could also distance him or her from the rest of the world. Thus, when we consider the role of self–other overlap and target specificity in perspective-taking, it becomes apparent that who the target is becomes an important moderator of the effects of perspective-taking. Although walking more slowly down a hallway after taking the perspective of an elderly man is essentially harmless, hating the world after taking the perspective of a skinhead is a frightening and socially maladaptive consequence. Perspective-taking can have a dark and ironic side, one that may impair rather than facilitate social bonds.

The manner in which perspectives are taken can also have a crucial impact on the consequences and effects of perspective-taking (Galinsky & Ku, 2005; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001). For example, Galinsky and Ku (2005) found evidence that perspective-taking reduces the drive toward expectancy confirmation, but only when the perspective-taking instructions were especially vivid, process-oriented, and descriptive. The beneficial outcomes of perspective-taking did not survive minimal manipulations: simply telling people to take another's perspective, without telling them how to do so, does not seem to have a discernable impact on social behavior. Perspective-taking that lacks deep deliberation, however, can actually be costly to the self and others. An example of how cursory consideration of other's perspectives can lead individuals and groups down ill-conceived paths is the story of the Abilene Paradox. In what Jerry Harvey (1988) calls the 'mismanagement of agreement', the Abilene Paradox is a story of a family from a small town in Texas that is enjoying a cool and relaxed time of sipping lemonade on their porch. One family member proposes that they go out for dinner and they decide to leave the languid luxury of the porch to go to hot and dusty Abilene for a substandard dinner. As it turns out, none of the individuals had a desire to go to Abilene, including the person who made the original suggestion, but each expresses agreement only because they assume the others are enthusiastic about the idea. The Abilene Paradox suggests that pallid perspective-taking might increase pluralistic ignorance, the tendency to see the overt behavior of others, despite being the same as one's own, as having different underlying causes (Miller & McFarland, 1987). In the case of Abilene, the overt expressions of support and agreement by others are presumed to correspond to an underlying enthusiasm even though the same overt behavior by the self is underpinned with ambivalence. Each person considers the others' perspective, but only cursorily and not in a way that understands or appreciates everyone's ambivalence. By trying to do right by others and not expressing one's true underlying feelings, right is done by and for no one. The absence of or superficial perspective-taking can create situations that nobody desires, leading to frustration and the potential for future conflict.

Another potential irony of perspective-taking can result when we consider what might happen if two parties take each other's perspectives. Thus far, we have only considered a situation with one perspective-taker and one target—the perspective-taker adapts his or her behavior to the target. What might happen if two individuals are both perspective-takers and simultaneously targets of perspective-taking? Interpersonal bias should decrease according to previous findings, but ironically, both parties might attempt to mimic the others' behaviors, resulting in social miscoordination. As both sides attempt to predict each other's thoughts, desires, and actions, they can pass each other in the night. Negotiations, for instance, are one context in which such miscoordination can play out. Perspective-taking by one negotiator in a dyad has been shown to lead to the creation of value and the construction of creative agreements that meet both parties' interests (Galinsky & Ku, 2005). However, perspective-taking by

both parties of a dyad may lead to poorer coordination than if only one negotiator took the perspective. For example, in the context of cross-cultural negotiations, Japanese and American negotiators use very different methods for acquiring information at the bargaining table. Americans tend to exchange information directly by discussing and sharing information, whereas Japanese negotiators tend to seek and share information indirectly by inferring preferences from offers and counteroffers (Adair, Okumura, & Brett, 2001). If both parties are taking the perspective of the other and adopting the other's behavior, the Americans may exchange information indirectly and the Japanese may use more direct methods of information acquisition. Not only might the well-intentioned negotiators pass each other in the night, but each negotiator will also be using an unfamiliar strategy, potentially leading to poorer performance than if neither had taken the perspective of the other side!

Conclusion

This article recommends perspective-taking as a simple and subtle strategy to form and strengthen social bonds. The benefits of perspective-taking are numerous—it reduces stereotyping and prejudice, encourages helping behavior, and promotes behavioral mimicry and social coordination, all through increasing self–other overlap. Since perspective-taking assists in the formation and maintenance of specific social bonds, it does not activate a general helping mind-set, and therefore, is not a panacea for reducing all social bias—although specific bonds are built, others may be damaged.

Despite its potential drawbacks, we contend that perspective-taking is a useful tool for forming and supporting specific social bonds. By walking a mile in another's shoes, perspective-takers can apply their own self-concepts to stereotyped targets, thereby improving evaluations and preventing stereotyped judgments in most cases. At the same time, perspective-takers often utilize the targets' stereotypes in the service of social coordination, leading them to behave in ways stereotypic of the target's group. Who knew walking in the shoes of another could be so comfortable?

Note

1. Stereotype suppression can sometimes be a successful strategy for controlling stereotyping when individuals have abundant cognitive resources and are highly and internally motivated to control stereotyping (Gordijn, Hindriks, Koomen, Dijksterhuis, & van Knippenberg, 2004; Monteith, Spicer, & Tooman, 1998).

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